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RATIONALIZATION OF THE RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION.

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ALTHOUGH THE PATTERN OF RURAL TO URBAN MIGRATION IS BEGINNING TO SUBSIDE, THE PROBLEMS OF EMPLOYMENT FACED BY THESE RURAL MIGRANTS ARE CONTINUING. PROGRAMS TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH THEIR RELOCATION AND EMPLOYMENT HAVE NOT BEEN DEVISED, AND EFFORTS TO DATE HAVE BEEN CURATIVE RATHER THAN PREVENTIVE. A PRACTICAL WAY TO RATIONALIZE THE RURAL-URBAN MOVEMENT WOULD BE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SERIES OF "SENDING" AND "RECEIVING" CENTERS IN THE MAJOR AREAS OF MIGRATION. "SENDING" CENTERS, LOCATED IN THE RURAL AREAS, WOULD CHANNEL PEOPLE TO THE "RECEIVING" CENTERS IN THE METROPOLITAN AREAS. THE BASIC OBJECTIVE OF THIS PLAN WOULD BE TO ACHIEVE THE BEST MATCH OF JOB LOCATIONS AND PEOPLE. THUS THE PROBLEMS OF RURAL POVERTY AND MIGRATION WOULD BEST BE SOLVED BY COUPLING THE "CENTERS" CONCEPT WITH AN URBAN AND RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY ADDRESSED TO THE QUESTION OF HOW AND WHERE FUTURE POPULATION CAN BEST BE ASSIMILATED. THIS SPEECH WAS PRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL OUTLOOK CONFERENCE ON RURAL YOUTH, OCTOBER 23-26, 1967, WASHINGTON, D. C., SPONSORED JOINTLY BY THE U. S. DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE, HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE, INTERIOR, AND LABOR, OEO, AND THE PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL ON YOUTH OPPORTUNITY. (ES)

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Special Session on Employment of Rural Youth in Rural and Urban Areas

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RATIONALIZATION OF THE RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION

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In our urban-minded society, it is unfortunately true that problems of rural poverty are not heard except as an echo of the explosions in the ghettos. It is in casting about for the causes of the upheavals that we are beginning to discern the roots of the problem that have long been generally ignored.

Estimates of what we are now spending on human adjustment efforts in urban areas range from $10 to $20 billion annually depending upon what programs are included. There are those who believe an additional $100 billion is indicated.

These programs and proposals are directed to situations that have already become impacted. At best they are curative, not preventive. Often they are merely palliative. We sprinkle the cities to get by from one hot week to the next.

Our attention and our resources are focused on the delta-like ghettos receiving the deposits of migratory streams. But virtually nothing is being done to control the flow at its source; to divert streams into new, more fruitful directions, to build reservoirs and dams so that the pent up forces can be converted into productive energy to be used when and where needed.

This is perhaps an excessively elaborate way of suggesting the need for a preventive program which seeks to rationalize, by govenmental intervention at strategic points, the rural-urban realtionship.

I should say at the outset that my concern is more that of a worried bureaucrat than an academic researcher. After looking at some of the data and studies, my inclination to be intuitive is emboldened by my observation that the social scientists, examining the same data are unable to agree among themselves.

Let me then set forth my own favorite set of facts and then get to my major interest -- a programmatic approach to the problems of migration.

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1. The urban employment vortex exerts tremendous suction on redundant rural people which generates uncontrolled mass migration.
2. Increasingly, employment in the cities is in the white collar categories for which most rural migrants are unsuited. So that the jobless unskilled farm worker become the jobless, unskilled ghetto resident.
3. Cities do not now possess facilities for assimilating rural migrants.
4. The national bill for programs addressed to the problem in the central cities is staggering whether measured in money outlays, in human terms or in terms of potential production, unfulfilled.
5. The excessive cost of aimless migration and the high value of constructive mobility suggest a public interest in the orderly movement of people.
6. Failure to ameliorate the migration problem with adequate public programs will ensure a continuing source of fuel for the fires already burning in the northern ghettos.

Any one of these points could be extended at length. Let me touch briefly on some of them and move on to the consideration of prescriptive programs.

Roughly 10 million persons shifted from rural to urban areas during the 50's; though for some there was no change of residence. They were simply redefined. The predominance of young people characterized this rural-urban migration; they accounted for two-thirds of the movement. And about one-fourth of these youth were Negroes.

In the first 6 years of the present decade, net migration eased a little to 800,000 annually, although the migration rate went up. Assuming the continuation of past patterns, we can expect about 3 1/2 million young people to leave their rural homes during the sixties.

These estimates suggest that we are not yet "over the hill" in terms of the continuing impact of inmigration to the central cities.

The muscle pushing people out of rural areas is well known to you. For farmers they include the increasing costliness of farming operations. Capital assets on an average farm have risen from $17,000 in 1950 to $66,000 today. It will go to $123,000 by 1980. Small holders are selling out to larger, more efficient operations. Young men find it virtually impossible to start in farming except through family inheritance.

Similar factors are operating to reduce the number of man-hours worked on farms by 40 percent by 1980. One by one, farm operations are succumbing to mechanization. Probably no harvesting operation is immune if the prospective savings are great enough.

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The constriction in jobs and the resulting outflow of population are not limited to the farms. Businesses in rural areas have been consolidated under the impact of transportation improvements, changes in the processing and distribution of farm products and the economies of scale.

The atmosphere in the community sometimes provides another push. In some communities, the jobless and under-educated are encouraged to leave in order to relieve the drain on welfare services or, in the case of tenants, to consolidate farm holdings. Pressures are most intense on racial minorities.

The negative efforts of outmigration are cumulative. People leave; tax receipts shrink. Local government is less able to provide services. Business firms are less likely to locate or remain. More people leave and the process feeds upon itself. Older brothers or sisters who have left become impressive models serving to pull the rest of the family to the cities.

We do not know enough about the actual process of migration. The commonly accepted notion is that migration occurs in stages. First to a small town or city near home, then to a larger and more distant city and finally to a metropolis in another region.

Although fewer young migrants are moving into the cities than in the 50's, their number and their effect on a job market already overcrowded with inexperienced, unskilled workers is still considerable.

The newcomer to the central city enters a world of delapidated housing; inadequate schools, recreation, and health factilities; rising crime rates and a complex of problems affecting the employment of the residents.

To take a sharper look at the problems of joblessness in urban slums, the Department of Labor conducted intensive surveys in the ghettos of 13 cities in 1966. They found a far more critical situation than was commonly assumed.

They found unemployment, as conventionally measured, varying from 7 to 16 percent and averaging over 10 percent.

In addition to those jobless in the conventional sense of being unemployed and looking for work, the interviewers found many working full time but earning too little to meet minimum subsistence needs. They found others who had only part-time jobs and still other who had given up job seeking in the belief that it was a hopeless undertaking--or simply did not know how to go about it. A concept of a "sub-employment" was developed to take account of the entire area of employment hardship. According to this index, one resident in three had a serious employment problem. And, of course, teenagers fared worse than the rest.

In other areas of social concern, it was found that 64 percent of those 20 years of age and over had not completed high school (the national proportion is 11 percent). Thirty-seven percent of all family units were headed by women. (For the country generally, the rate is 21 percent.)

Within this dismal setting, the rural migrant probably fares even more poorly than his urban neighbors. Bauder and Burchinal, in their study, found that farm migrants moved to Des Moines mainly in the hope of securing better employment. They were, however, at a considerable disadvantage in the job market because of low educational attainment. The annual BLS survey of educational attainment confirms that rural residents leave school earlier than do those in urban areas. The comparison is 8.7 to 12.2 years of schooling. Given his inadequate education, lack of relevant vocational training and his general ignorance of city ways, his chances of making a satisfactory adjustment are dim indeed.

The debate over what needs to be done is often structured to reflect specific terms of reference. If the problem is posed in terms of the fate of the rural community, the responses tend to be in terms of rural development, moving jobs in to rural people. If however, we take as our frame of reference the problems associated with the rural-urban relationship, the relevant considerations are broader.

Ours is a pluralistic view. Wherever possible, life should be made more meaningful for those in rural areas. Public policy should address the problem of securing the economic base of rural areas as well as preparing those who will leave. When the latter situation is indicated, the need is to rationalize the migration process from beginning to end; from sending to receiving communities.

It is not a question of either - or. It is a question of what and where.

Most of you are familiar with many of the programs directed in whole or in part to the rural communities.

...The many activities of the Department of Agriculture.
...The appalachian Regional Development Act designed to achieve an integrated Federal-State program in the 12 States which comprise the largest contiguous area of rural poverty in the country.

The touchstone to the development of human resources is education. And there have been several facets to the attack on the problem of improving the education of rural children, youth, and adults. This, of course, is necessary whether the people go or remain.

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...In 1966, for the first time, some rural pre-school children had the advantage of the Head Start program.
...The Elementary and Secondary Education Act is reaching out to the educationally-deprived children in the one room school house in Appalachia, the adobe schools in the Southwest as well as the schools in the urban ghettos.
...A significant enlargement of opportunities was embodied in the Vocational-Education Act of 1963 and more importantly, the new Act helped get away from the earlier over-emphasis on farming in rural schools. Agricultural instruction now includes training for nonfarm industries.
...Rural youth, no longer in school, can obtain skill training and work experience under the Manpower Development and Training Act and the Neighborhood Youth Corps.
...In addition, Community Action Agencies under the Office of Economic Opportunity are being organized in rural areas and the U.S. Employment Service, through its Smaller Communities Program, is bringing mobile Teams with a full range of services to rural residents.

Each of these programs are helpful, although limited in their impact and not sufficiently related to each other.

Secretary Freeman put the case for the rural areas very succinctly when he suggested that "we need to exert as much imagination and effort to build progressive and workable non-metropolitan regions as we are now investing in the big city and its sprawling suburbs."

I would only add that we need to recognize the inter-relationships and to structure the continuum. We need practical ways of rationalizing the rural-urban movement. . .of encouraging those who would like to and probably should remain in the rural community to do so. . .of aiding those who migrate so as to maximize their chances for a successful move.

I would suggest (and here I come to the major point), consideration of a network of "Sending" and "Receiving" centers criss-crossing the major pattern of migration. The basic objective would be to achieve the best match of job locations and people. European counties have successfully used this kind of an institution and so have we in connection with the employment of Mexican farm laborers in agriculture.

Sending Centers would be located in the rural areas of original departure.

Receiving Centers would be established at the other end of the line--in the metropolitan areas.

Smaller towns and cities which are intermediate points in the migration would have both kinds of Centers.

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The network of Centers would be linked by a modern communication system so that the transmission of information would be timely and accurate.

The sending Centers would seek out the would-be migrant and provide him with a general orientation as well as with specific information. It would function somewhat like the agricultural county agent and the Extension Service. Its activities would include:

1. Counseling the prospective migrant and assessing his likelihood of making a successful migration.
2. If necessary, assisting the client in obtaining additional educational and training in preparation for his move.
3. Providing employment, housing and social service information about prospective migration cities.
4. Discussing wage rates, living expenses and the kinds of problems likely to be encountered in central cities.
5. Advising on travel routes, bus and train schedules, and fares.
6. Telling migrants about the services and operation of the Receiving Center in his destination city.

In short, the Sending Center must be a combination of travel agent; family advisor and job and social services counselor.

It is important that these advisors be able to speak the language of their client and gain his respect and confidence. Ideally, it might be a local person who had been a migrant and gone through the migration experience. This is a perfect example of where "the message is the media."

To provide some leverage to the Sending Centers in their efforts to ensure an orderly movement of people, provision might be made for moving qualified migrants to certified job opportunities at public expense, provided adequate standards are observed. This would give the prospective migrant an incentive to participate in the System.

At the other end of the Migration System are the Receiving Centers in the urban communities. These Centers may vary in size from a modest office in a small town to a multi-service neighborhood center in larger cities. Its basic function is to ease the settling-in process. To facilitate the urbanization process, the Centers could:

1. Advise on housing and perhaps provide temporary quarters.
2. Counsel on job opportunities including suggestions on how to seek employment.
3. Advise on what it costs to live in the city--rent, food, clothing and other costs.
4. Warn of the pitfalls of loan offices and installment buying.

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5. Provide information on the kinds of health, education, training and social services available.
6. Assist in finding relatives and friends living in the city.

In this connection, it is important to underscore the role of friends and relatives in the cultural and social support of the migrant. Governmental intervention efforts must recognize the build upon this informal, but strong institution.

A close and continuing relationship among the Centers in the network is necessary to provide individual attention to each migrant. The itineraries of migrants should be known to the Receiving Center so that the newcomer can be met and taken to the Center. Employees of the migration system might wear identifying insignia so as to be recognizable to the migrant.

I do not propose that we start from scratch in providing all the facilities and services required by the migration system. Many of these already exist and could constitute the "building blocks" for the proposed system. The difficulty is that these services are fragmented both in terms of program sponsorship and geographic location. Seasoned bureaucrats are unable to find their way through the labyrinth; what chance does the migrant have?

We are, however, beginning to reationalize our own disjointed human resources programs. One of the most encouraging developments is the concept of a multi-service center. . .a kind of supermarket where, under one roof, a client may receive the entire spectrum of employment, health, welfare, and other services.

Another approach at consolidating manpower services and programs is the Concentrated Employment Programs. Here, job orientation, occupational training, work experience and job placement programs are all administered under single central direction in a specific target area.

These kinds of programs can become integral parts of the Migration System. Private and voluntary agencies such as Traveler's Aid and local hospitality houses should not be overlooked.

We are not completely without experience in the orderly relocation of unemployed rural migrants.

Under the recent amendments to the Manpower Development and Training Act, the Department of Labor was authorized to explore, through a series of pilot projects, the effectiveness of aiding jobless workers, by a range of services and financial assistance, to move to areas of employment.

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The early results are encouraging. Moreover, some of the findings may be useful in implementing the proposal under discussion. For example, it was found that:

1. Even with offers of direct assistance, older rural persons are less willing to move than young people.
2. One of the greatest obstacles to relocation is lack of low-cost housing, especially for non-whites.
3. Unanticipated expenses overwhelm the migrant and cause him to return home.
4. There is a continuing need for support and counseling services even after the move.

Despite my emphasis upon a Migration System to rationalize the rural-urban movement, I do not pretend that this proposal by itself will do the job completely. It must be coupled with an urban and rural economic development policy addressed to the question of how and where future population growth can be assimilated in the most efficient manner. Subsumed here must be the problem of mis-matching of people and job locations. For example, what do we do about growth of white collar industries in the central city for which the ghetto resident is unprepared? Or what do we do about the unskilled jobs in the suburbs which are inaccessible to residents of the inner city.

The migration system must, of course, involve the cooperation of local, State, and Federal agencies. However, given the inter-state nature of the operation and the understandable constraints that the sending and receiving communities have, the Federal responsibility must be significant.

In closing, let me summarize the observations made recently by the Under Secretary of Agriculture, John A. Schnittker.

People have flocked to the cities seeking the jobs, schools, housing and conveniences they lacked in the countryside. Some of them, those who were better prepared, found many of the opportunities they sought. But millions of others, poorly equipped in terms of skills and education found only unemployment, or low-paying jobs; poverty, debt, and crime. They did not solve their own problems -- they simply added to the huge mass of untrained manpower already clogging the cities.

Perhaps the most hopeful sign is that we are beginning to realize that the human alienation and physical dissolution of the great cities are closely linked to the depopulation and civic hopelessness of the rural areas. They are not isolated phenomena; but two sides of the same coin.

With this awareness should come the kind of responses, approaches and programs that I have tried to suggest in this presentation.